

An open letter to the University of Colorado Community

Dear Members of the University of Colorado Community,

I am honored and humbled that the Board of Regents has named me as finalist for the CU presidency and I look forward to visiting each campus to meet as many of you as possible. I am excited about the prospect of working together to elevate the positive impact and reputation of CU.

The heart of a university is its students, faculty, staff, and the communities and state that it serves. CU's four campuses have a history of excellence, they advance research and learning in countless ways, and they have produced strong leaders. It would be a privilege to join you in advancing the vital role that the university plays in the continued success of Colorado and the nation.

Some of you have voiced concern about my voting record when I served in Congress more than a decade ago. While in Congress, I cast perhaps 4,000 votes, many on difficult topics. I am happy to address votes as to how they would impact my actions and decisions as president. On some, the societal consensus has changed over the past decade-plus, as has my own thinking.

Like many friends and colleagues on both sides of the aisle in Congress, my position on marriage has evolved. Would I vote the same way today? No. My record in supporting the LGBTQ+ community reflects a deep respect for the dignity of each individual. Students, faculty, staff and members of our community will have my full support and respect no matter who they love or how they identify. I am committed to be a leader for all.

At the University of North Dakota, I issued an anti-discrimination and harassment policy covering sexual orientation and gender identity as strong as similar policies at CU. At UND, we have attracted talented LGBTQ+ individuals to leadership roles and expanded programming in support of our LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff. I will ensure that senior university leaders share my commitment to non-discrimination and the benefits of diversity.

Let me also note that I support shared governance and academic freedom issues that leaves the authority for research activities with the campuses.

I am passionate about advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education. Inclusion is one of UND's key goals, and I pledge to foster a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment at CU and to keep CU a forum for the free exchange of ideas. I know you share these commitments, and I would make them foundations of my presidency if appointed to serve at CU.

I will be on each campus the week of April 22 for open forums and to meet you. Please attend these forums, bring your questions and concerns, and share your hopes and aspirations for the University of Colorado. I am excited to meet you.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Kennedy